THE SUFFOLK RESOLVES:

A NEGLECTED CATALYST OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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To My Father

Bobby Knox

For instilling in me a lifelong love of learning

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myself lucky to have been one of her students and hope to pass on the lessons she taught me, both in and out of the classroom, to my future pupils.

ABSTRACT

Before Lexington and Concord, glimmers of revolutionary thoughts and ideas existed in the American colonies; however, a document known as the Suffolk Resolves, written in mid-1774, crystallized these divergent ideas into a more consistent response to troubling British policies. The Suffolk Resolves signaled to the First Continental Congress that segments of the American populace, while still loyal to George III, were willing to raise a militia to protect their rights from Parliamentary actions that they deemed harmful to American interests. The Continental Congress' endorsement of these resolutions shifted the momentum in favor of more radical elements and hardened positions in both Britain and the colonies. This thesis analyzes the Suffolk Resolves and their place in the historiography of the American Revolution. It considers the political tension underlying the writing and passage of the Resolves as well as the reaction to the document in both America and Britain. The thesis highlights the significance of the Suffolk Resolves as a transitional catalyst leading to the American Revolution.

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PREFACE

On September 11, 1774, Paul Revere set off on horseback from Milton, Massachusetts, carrying a series of resolutions from the Suffolk County Convention in his saddlebags. Over an impressively quick, yet exhausting, five day period, Revere traveled over 350 miles of rough, winding roads with an express mission to deliver the Suffolk Resolves to the First Continental Congress meeting at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[1] The First Continental Congress delegates anxiously awaited news from Boston where the Cambridge Powder Alarm had led to reports (later proved false) of bloodshed and destruction of the city. Revere's arrival brought news of the true situation in Boston, but did little to relieve the tense atmosphere. The Resolves he brought initiated bitter debate and "galvanized the First Continental Congress into taking a stand" on Boston's plight.[2] John Adams wrote in a diary entry on September 17, 1774, remarking on the adoption of these resolutions by the First Continental Congress: "This was one of the happiest Days of my Life. In Congress we had generous, noble Sentiments, and manly Eloquence. This Day convinced me that America will support the [sic] Massachusetts or

[1] David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (New York: Oxford, 1994), 26.

[2] Benjamin W. Labaree, *Colonial Massachusetts: A History* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1979), 272.

perish with her."[3] The Philadelphia delegates' endorsement of the Resolves pushed them "to decide what stand to take" on the broader Anglo-American relationship.[4]

The Stamp Act, Boston Tea Party, First Continental Congress, and the Declaration of Rights and Grievances are all familiar components in the story leading up to the American Revolution. While seemingly peripheral today, lost in both the passage of time and the writing of history, the Suffolk Resolves constitute a document that would have resonated just as deeply with the people of their time as any of the aforementioned occurrences. The Resolves served as a transitional catalyst in the movement towards revolution. It was the Suffolk Resolves that took divergent elements of resistance to British actions and crystalized them into a consistent and coherent response to troubling British policies. They provided the first sign that resistance in Colonial America was rooted more deeply than previously perceived, as demonstrated when the other colonies threw their support behind Boston. They contained the first implied threat to take up arms against Great Britain if colonial demands were not met. The Resolves forced the First Continental Congress to take a stand (though primarily verbal support) on the immediate crisis involving Boston. The endorsement of the Resolves sparked intense debate over a proper response to the broader disputes with Great Britain and shifted the tone of the Continental Congress to a slightly more radical one. The Suffolk Resolves proved pivotal to British thinking, convincing officials that they could not back down and that legislative activity would not bring the rebellious colonists under control.

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[3] John Adams, *Diary*, September 17, 1774, quoted in Edmund C. Burnett, ed. *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*. Vol.1 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1921), 34. Adobe PDF eBook.

[4] Labaree, 272.

Despite their significance at the time, the Resolves have been subsumed in historical writings for a variety of reasons. The First Continental Congress sent the Resolves to Parliament along with their own Declaration of Rights and Grievances, a more moderate document that addressed similar issues as the Resolves, but without the fiery tone or suggestion of armed resistance. Moreover, a collective body representing twelve colonies developed the Declaration of Rights and Grievances, legitimizing that document as reflecting shared grievances across multiple colonies. The Suffolk Resolves, though endorsed by the First Continental Congress, could be dismissed as representing the dissatisfaction of a single colony. Furthermore, historical accounts of the Revolutionary Era consistently moved towards a national narrative, emphasizing a unified march towards freedom and democracy and the role of early national leaders. Local developments, like the Suffolk Resolves, faded into the background.

This work seeks to highlight one pivotal moment within the broader scope of American Revolutionary history. Restoring the Suffolk Resolves to the position they once held serves to expand our knowledge rather than diminish the significance of more well-known events. This study analyzes the Suffolk Resolves and explores the public climate surrounding the document's creation, their reception by contemporaries and the overall significance of the Suffolk Resolves.

CHAPTER I

THE SUFFOLK RESOLVES IN AMERICAN REVOLUTION HISTORIOGRAPHY

Historians of the American Revolution often either ignore the Suffolk Resolves entirely or cover them somewhat superficially. This occurs both in terms of the substance of the pre-revolutionary document and in the presentation of its significance in the broader development of revolutionary discourse. Often historians limit any mention of the Suffolk Resolves to either a small cluster of sentences or a generic footnote, basically noting its delivery to the First Continental Congress by Paul Revere and its passage by that body. Some works include the text or excerpts from the document or a brief overview of key point before moving on to the more familiar revolutionary documents and battlefield activity. An analysis of the treatment of the Resolves from the early works of contemporary chroniclers to more recent writings by revolutionary scholars reveals significant differences in terms of their perception of its radicalism and its significance to the broader revolutionary discourse and independence movement. The analysis also reveals that American and British historians often view the Revolutionary era in general, and the Suffolk Resolves in particular, in very different terms.

Early commentators, both American and British, directly following the American Revolution generally mentioned the Suffolk Resolves and seemed to recognize them as significant in shaping the direction of colonial resistance. David Ramsay in *The History of the American Revolution* (1789) referenced the "spirited resolutions" and noted the

uncertainty of how they would be received. Ramsay characterized the Suffolk Resolves as contributing greatly to the solidification of a unified colonial resistance and the movement towards war. Ramsay also commented on the frustration the British government felt following the endorsement of the Resolves by the First Continental Congress.[1] Mercy Otis Warren, in *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* (1805), saw the boldness and determination of the delegates as representative of the spirit of Americans. She noted that the Suffolk Resolves "were considered by [the British] government to be the most overt acts of treason that had yet taken place" and that the actions of the Suffolk Convention captured the "spirit of Americans at that time."[2]

The portrayal of the Suffolk Resolves by early British historians varied significantly depending upon their overall view of the merit of the American Revolution and their attitude toward the British political system.[3] American events often take a backseat to broader concerns about the state of the British imperial system in British historiography. To British historians, the American colonies were "passive objects on the periphery," considered only at times of crisis and primarily in relation to understanding the actions of Kings and Parliament.[4] The importance of the Resolves lay not so much in what happened in America

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[1] David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution*, ed. Lester H. Cohen (1789; repr., Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1990), 119, 147.

[2] Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* (1805; repr., New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1970), 160-161.

[3] For an overview of late 18th and 19th century British approaches to the American Revolution as a whole, see Richard Middleton, "British Historians and the American Revolution," *Journal of American Studies* 5, no. 1 (April 1971): 43-58.

[4] Middleton, "British Historians and the American Revolution," 47, 58.

as in how it reflected and altered politics in Great Britain. Additionally, British historians generally see the resistance as developing only in 1775 so earlier precursors like the Suffolk Resolves tend to receive minimal coverage.

Beginning with John Andrews' four-volume account of the war published in 1785, British historians wrote about the American Revolution largely in terms of "resigned bitterness" at the supposed passing of their empire. They did little more than narrate events and often lacked familiarity with the American colonies or access to American source materials. Andrews saw the Revolution as a whole as "a senseless act of political desecration."[5] Even those Whig historians supportive of the American cause like William Gordon, one of few early British writers to use American sources, provided little more than a simple narrative of events. Gordon's *The History of the Rise, Progress and Establishment of the Independence of the United States of America* (originally published in London in 1788) included a reference to the "spirited preamble" of the Suffolk Resolves, excerpted a significant portion of the grievances, and quoted the Continental Congress' response. He spoke of the Suffolk citizens anxiously awaiting news and acknowledged that they saw approval as a sign to move forward with arming and training a militia.[6] Gordon's concern was less on the actual events in the colonies than on using colonial tensions to comment on perceived shortcomings of British imperial administration. Even though Gordon provided

[5] Ibid., 43.

[6] William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Establishment of the Independence of the United States of America: Including An Account of the Late War, and of the Thirteen Colonies, from their Origin to that Period* (New York: John Woods, 1801), 255-257. Adobe PDF eBook.

little direct commentary on the Suffolk Resolves, their inclusion suggests that he considered them significant and recognized that the Continental Congress' response set the tone for the next stage of Anglo-American affairs.

Most of the early British accounts, however, exhibited a Tory bias and considered the events of the American Revolution in general, and the Suffolk Resolves in particular, in a more negative light. Less critical of the British government than Whig historians, they placed the responsibility for the troubles in the American colonies on the ungrateful colonies. John Adolphus, in *The History of England* (originally published in 1802) summarized the content of the Resolves and asserted that their adoption by the First Continental Congress illustrated the underlying shift from competing colonial interests to a sense of common cause.[7] He stated that the Suffolk Convention "passed resolutions more decidedly hostile to the authority of Great Britain than any which had yet been explicitly sanctioned." Further, he saw the resolutions as calculated to inspire resistance and frame obedience to Parliament as a "dereliction of natural right." [8]

Mid-19th century American historians, best exemplified by George Bancroft, reflected a new nationalist approach to the writing of American history. Bancroft's *History of the United States: From the Discovery of the American Continent,* written in 1858, continued to approach the Suffolk Resolves from a similar vantage point as Warren and Ramsay, but downplayed its significance as a catalyst. The Suffolk Resolves seemed to be considered less

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[7] Ibid., 25, 29.

[8] John Adolphus, *The History of England, From the Accession of King George the Third, to the Conclusion of Peace in the Year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty-Three* (London: In the Strand, 1810), 125. Adobe PDF eBook.

as a radical statement of their own and more a minor component of the larger collective actions of the First Continental Congress. Their endorsement was seen as less significant in its own right and more as an example of the wisdom and reported unanimity of the First Continental Congress.[9]

Following Bancroft's seminal classic, American historians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries continued this generic approach in regard to addressing the issue of the Suffolk Resolves. John Fiske, in *The American Revolution* (1891), provided a brief overview of the document and its development, but failed to consider its broader significance in the movement towards revolution.[10] British historians of the mid-nineteenth century returned to a more Whiggish interpretation. While Tory historians had blamed ungrateful colonists for the revolution, notable mid-nineteenth century British historians such as John Richard Green and Sir George Otto Trevelyan placed responsibility squarely in the hands of King George III and his ministers, thus specific local events received little or no mention in their works.[11] British historians of the early twentieth century, led by Sir Lewis Namier, remained focused on analyzing the structure of British politics during the reign of George III. The American Revolution as a whole received little mention.[12] It was often seen as an anomaly or an aberration, and the focus shifted to the inability of the North administration to provide

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[9] George Bancroft, *History of the United States, From the Discovery of the American Continent* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1858), 134.

[10] John Fiske, *The American Revolution* (Boston: The University Press Cambridge, 1891), 108-112.

[11] Middleton, "British Historians and the American Revolution", 49-50.

[12] Middleton, "British Historians and the American Revolution", 54, 57.

alternative policies to control the developing situation in America. The political atmosphere of the time left the British government no choice but to clamp down on the colonies, an understandable but fatal decision. With this focus, colonial unrest remains in the background, and specific incidents in a single county do not merit mention.

American historiography from the imperial school dominated from the 1930s to the 1950s. Lawrence Henry Gipson's *The Triumphant Empire: Britain Sails into the Storm 1770-1776*, though written in 1967, reflects his training in the imperial school of thought. He included a summary of the Suffolk Resolves, noting that following the approval of the Resolves by the First Continental Congress the mood of the delegates shifted to "not one of compromise."[13] More importantly, Gipson's work stands as one of the earliest characterizations of the Suffolk Resolves as being "revolutionary in nature…judged by their similarity to the later Declaration of Independence."[14] In that same vein, constitutional historians Alfred Kelly and Winifred Harbison's *The American Constitution: Its Origins and Development* (1970) stressed the Suffolk delegates' strategic decision to try to push the Continental Congress toward a more radical position and saw its passage as evidence of radicals gaining the upper hand.[15] British historians writing at the same time continued to downplay incidents like the Suffolk Resolves. Bernard Donoughue's *British Politics and the*

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[13] Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The Triumphant Empire: Britain Sails Into the Storm* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 251.

[14] Ibid., 158, 245.

[15] Alfred Kelly and Winifred Harbison, *The American Constitution: Its Origins and Development*, 4th ed. (New York: WW Norton, 1970), 84.

American Revolution (1964) included the Suffolk Resolves, but referenced them only as resolutions sent with the Declaration of Rights in early 1775 to Britain.[16]

Beginning with the progressive school of American historians, attention returned to the roots of the original rebellion. Merrill Jensen's *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution* (1968) described the text of the Resolves as "inflammatory" and counted their passage by the First Continental Congress as a huge strategic victory for popular leaders that committed Congress to the program outlined within the document.[17] Additionally, the approval of the Suffolk Resolves, Jensen argued, committed Congress to the idea of the "law of nature" as a guiding principle in the future political discourse and proved "crucial in the affairs of the Continental Congress."[18] David Ammerman, in the 1974 monograph *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774,* described the Suffolk Resolves as "supposedly radical" and saw Congress' endorsement of the document as the "first indication of the temperament of the delegates."[19]

Authors influenced by the rise of the new social history movement have committed to restoring the common people to the grand narrative of history, thus focusing more attention on developments at the local level and among less well-known figures. The 1976 monograph

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[16] Bernard Donoughue, *British Politics and the American Revolution: The Path to War, 1773-75* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1964), 219.

[17] Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 496.

[18] Ibid., 503, 551.

[19] David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), 74-75.

Empire or Independence, 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the Revolution, co-written by British historian Ian R. Christie and American historian Benjamin W. Labaree, argued that the Suffolk Resolves served as a "major factor" leading the First Continental Congress towards a more radical position. Christie and Labaree contended that the Resolves "outlined a strong programme of defiance for the inhabitants of that county to pursue, including a posture of civil disobedience in respect to the royal government under General Thomas Gage."[20] Page Smith, in *A New Age Now Begins* (1976), added the unique suggestion that the Suffolk recommendation for purging the militia of those whose patriotism might be suspect served as the seeds of the later Minutemen.[21]

Jack Rakove's 1979 work *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress* contended that the Suffolk Resolves served as the "first serious test of congressional sentiment." Rakove argued that the Resolves were not "as belligerent or provocative as they have often been portrayed," but were "designed to express a forthright commitment to a program of resistance." The goal, in Rakove's opinion, was to "enable defiance without alienating support of the other colonies," while carrying out "a strategy of civil disobedience, but not passive resistance." Supporters of the Resolves aimed to disrupt the authority of new administrators in Britain, while avoiding armed confrontation. Rakove suggested that the endorsement of the Suffolk Resolves allowed the members of the

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[20] Ian R. Christie and Benjamin W. Labaree, *Empire or Independence, 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1976), 208-209.

[21] Page Smith, *A New Age Now Begins,* Vol. 1 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976), 459.

Continental Congress to accept a "moderate alternative to other imaginable measures."[22] Rakove's later Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Revolutionaries: A New History of the Invention of America* (2010), returned to a focus on the great political figures of the era. As a result, the Suffolk Resolves received mention only in terms of how they impacted the political careers of John and Samuel Adams, not their effect on the greater political discourse of the era.[23] British historian Colin Bonwick, in *The American Revolution* (1991), echoed some of Rakove's earlier sentiments in regard to the purpose of the passage of the Suffolk Resolves. Although, "inflammatory" in nature, Bonwick asserted that the First Continental Congress' primary goal "was to bring Massachusetts under collective continental control rather than incite it to fresh action."[24]

American historian T.H. Breen's *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (2010) gives the fullest account of the Suffolk Resolves available to date. Breen's focus on restoring the common people as agents of their own history led him to acknowledge the Suffolk Resolves as a "largely forgotten document." He saw the Suffolk Resolves as expressing a "shrill call for resistance to British authority" at the local level and influencing the actions of the so-called leaders. Breen argued that the Resolves resulted from a convention which "staked out an extreme position as a way to communicate its

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[22] Jack Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1979), 46-48.

[23] Jack Rakove, *Revolutionaries: A New History of the Invention of America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), 57.

[24] Colin Bonwick, *The American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 81.

uncompromising opposition to the Coercive Acts."[25] A contemporary of Breen, Ray Raphael in *Founders: The People Who Brought You a Nation* (2009), recognized the significance of the Resolves in shifting the tone of the First Continental Congress. He saw them as pushing conservative delegates like Galloway "into supporting them as to do otherwise was to risk being branded a traitor to the cause."[26]

Beyond the broader histories of the American Revolution, biographers of major players such as Paul Revere, Thomas Hutchinson, General Thomas Gage, and Joseph Warren attached great significance to the Suffolk Resolves. Esther Forbes, in the 1942 biography *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In*, argued that the Suffolk Resolves expressed an "out and out statement of potential revolution" and "proved to be a springboard from which it was easy to plunge into the bloody whirlpool of civil wars."[27] David Fischer's 1994 work *Paul Revere's Ride* described Revere's journey to Philadelphia carrying the Suffolk Resolves as "urgent" and referred to the Resolves themselves as "a decisive step in the road to revolution."[28] Bernard Bailyn in the 1974 biography *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* characterized the Suffolk Resolves as "ultimate and irreversible defiance." He described the Resolves as "a truly revolutionary document, an explicit declaration of independence"

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[25] T. H. Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 130.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1942), 226-227.

[28] Fischer, 26-27.

containing a "fervent, inflammatory preamble."[29] Bailyn contended that the Resolves made it no longer possible to find a balance between American claims and English authority.[30] John Richard Alden's *General Gage in America: Being Principally a History of His Role in the American Revolution* (1948) stated that the "famous Suffolk County Convention… boldly declared that force should, if necessary, be used to prevent the enslavement of Americans and even hinted that the patriots would take the aggressive if it were required for their own safety."[31] Samuel Forman's *Dr. Joseph Warren: The Boston Tea Party, Bunker Hill, and the Birth of American Liberty* (2012) focused on Joseph Warren's direct input into the development of the document and argues that the "resolves presented a crisp agenda for the newly convened Continental Congress." [32] John Cary's *Joseph Warren: Physician, Politician, Patriot* (1961) presented the Suffolk Resolves as "one of the most important acts in 1774." Cary contended that the Resolves forced the Continental Congress to "decide between humble petitions and quiet submission or disobedience and a defensive war." [33]

Although the Suffolk Resolves received little attention in national histories, they assumed a central place in local histories beginning with Teele's *History of Milton, Mass.*

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[29] Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1974), 303.

[30] Ibid., 305.

[31] John Richard Alden, *General Gage in America: Being Principally a History of His Role in the American Revolution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948), 215-216.

[32] Samuel A. Forman, *Dr. Joseph Warren: The Boston Tea Party, Bunker Hill, and the Birth of American Liberty* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2012), 217.

[33] John Cary, *Joseph Warren: Physician, Politician, Patriot* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 158.

from 1640-1887 (1887) and continuing with Lauriston L. Scaife's *Milton and the Suffolk Resolves* (1921) and later the Bicentennial pamphlet *The Story of the Suffolk Resolves* (1973).[34] Each of these works recounted the events surrounding the passage of the Suffolk Resolves, both on the County and Congressional levels, and reprinted the text. However, the focus in each tended to be on a narrative retelling of the events and blanket assertions of their significance with little analysis or documentary evidence to support the claims. For instance, Webster and Morris, in *The Story of the Suffolk Resolves*, simply claimed that the Resolves "produced a great effect in this country and in England" but provide no examples or proof of that effect, except for appending a few generic excerpts from press reports.[35]

Historians from colonial times to the present have certainly recorded a very basic narrative of the crafting and passage of the Suffolk Resolves; however, this important document deserves fuller coverage, particularly in regard to its reception at home and abroad and its role as a catalyst for the greater revolutionary movement.

[34] See Albert Teele, *History of Milton, Mass. from 1640-1887* (Boston: Press of Rockwell and Churchill, 1887), 423-425; Lauriston L. Scaife, *Milton and the Suffolk Resolves* (Boston: Milton Historical Society, 1921); and Mary Phillips Webster and Charles R. Morris, *The Story of the Suffolk Resolves* (Milton: The Revolutionary War Bicentennial Celebration Committee, 1973).

[35] Webster and Morris, 16.

CHAPTER II

ROAD TO THE RESOLVES

The Suffolk Resolves emerged out of an atmosphere of tension and resentment between developing colonies and an overextended imperial system following Britain's triumph in the Seven Year's War. This tension came to a head with the passage of the infamous Coercive Acts.[1] Prior to the passage of these acts in 1774, most Americans believed that their status as British subjects served them well and appreciated the sense of autonomy that distance from the mother country afforded them. They had grown accustomed to asserting their rights and getting redress through previous incidents like the Stamp Act Crisis. Thus, when a new dispute over the Tea Act erupted in 1773 few would have expected the crisis that ensued. This time, a small group of colonials in Boston asserted their rights by dumping a shipload of East India Company tea into the Boston Harbor. The so-called Boston Tea Party, which occurred on December 16, 1773, provoked a harsh response from the British government that took many by surprise. Americans seem to have been unaware that the British government had changed considerably since the Stamp Act of 1765. The men now in power in Great Britain rejected previous ministries' permissive attitudes and conciliatory policies which they believed had encouraged increased demands and defiance and threatened

[1] For the fullest accounts of the tensions surrounding the Coercive Acts, see David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974) and T.H. Breen *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010).

Parliamentary authority. In their mind, the Tea Party offered a chance to restore order and reassert their control.[2]

Political turmoil came to a boiling point throughout the six months following the Tea Party on both colonial and British fronts. Numerous Boston politicians continued to attempt to diplomatically resolve economic and social tensions, while public protests and acts of aggression continued in Boston.[3] In Boston, the Tea Party cemented the relationship between two men, Boston physician Joseph Warren and Samuel Adams, whose political partnership would play a significant role in the developing resistance in Boston and the passage of the Suffolk Resolves. Following the Tea Party, Warren and Adams sparked British suspicions due to their involvement with the planning and execution of this act of protest. Sufficient evidence existed to convict the two of treason, but Massachusetts Governor Thomas Gage and the British government elected to focus on retribution for the entirety of Massachusetts, not just the so-called conspirators in the city of Boston.[4]

Adams had begun visiting Warren in 1768 shortly before British troops landed in Boston. Over the course of the next six years, the political pairing blossomed into a personal friendship based on shared political ideologies. The two men spearheaded an unofficial communication network, with leaders across the colonies, that helped publicize their political positions as well as garner support for their cause in anticipation of Britain's response to the increasing colonial resistance. In a letter to Arthur Lee, the Massachusetts correspondent to

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[2] Ammerman, 13-14.

[3] Cary, 135.

[4] Ibid., 131-135.

Britain and France, in January 1774, Samuel Adams discussed Bostonians' resistance to the British plan to collect revenue through taxation of tea and asserted that the people of Boston should not be punished because the destruction of the tea resulted from British denial of legitimate colonial requests.[5] Likewise, Warren's correspondence with Lee reiterated the need for a shift in British-American relations.[6] Warren, Adams, and others worked diligently to remove the Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor, Thomas Hutchinson. Such efforts succeeded as the Ministry in England recalled Hutchinson for "consultation," but he never returned to Boston in his former position.[7]

As tensions in Massachusetts simmered, Thomas Gage traveled to Boston to begin his tenure as the next governor general, replacing Hutchinson. Governor Gage arrived in May 1774 with the Boston Port Bill, which effectively closed the Boston port on June 1, 1774. The Port Bill, a direct response to the Boston Tea Party, included the British demand that the East India Company be repaid for damages caused by the event. This act constituted one quarter of the Coercive (Intolerable) Acts. The government ordered the port closed without a British request for a colonial response, indicating that colonial protests had the unintended result of strengthening Britain's resolve. Parliament chose to assert their authority.[8] The closure of the port significantly restricted economic activity and the task of remedying the

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[5] Samuel Adams to Arthur Lee, January 1774, quoted in Harry Alonzo Cushing, *The Writings of Samuel Adams* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 76-77.

[6] Forman, 176.

[7] Ibid., 136.

[8] Phillip McFarland, *The Brave Bostonians: Hutchinson, Quincy, Franklin, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 33.

economic fallout fell to the Committees of Correspondence. In Boston, Joseph Warren took the lead in framing the colonial response. He met with the Boston Committee of Correspondence on May 12, 1774, penning a letter that declared that the Port Act violated the rights of Bostonians and even arguing that it ran counter to international law. Warren wrote a second letter during this meeting to inform the rest of the colonies of the events in Boston and to ask for their support. In order to secure the safe passage of this news, the Committee of Correspondence selected Paul Revere to deliver this information due to the trust Warren and other members of the committee placed in Revere, as well as their distrust of the royal mail system.[9] Parliament passed the remainder of the Coercive Acts throughout mid-1774. At the same time, the British government significantly increased the number of British troops in Boston. They expected the increased troop strength to help establish Gage's authority and comfort pro-British colonists. Ironically, the increased British military presence in the summer of 1774 escalated the sense of tension throughout Boston and the greater colonies as a whole.[10]

As Boston struggled under the demands of the Coercive Acts, surrounding colonies responded with offers of assistance. Committees of Correspondence throughout the colonies considered the plight of Boston and its implications for their own futures. Calls for an intercolonial Congress occurred against the backdrop of scattered acts of resistance and attacks on royal officials. Colonial leaders sought both to justify their resistance and to define their status within the broader British Empire. In Boston, where the Coercive Acts had the

[9] Cary, 137.

[10] Breen, 73.

most immediate impact, the focus turned to the economic crisis first. Warren and others worked to solidify the economic alliances that appeared through assistance from the other colonies. Warren penned the Solemn League and Covenant, requiring all signees to boycott English goods until Parliament repealed the Port Bill.[11] This created a "means of enforcement...outside of normal governmental channels" in regard to British boycotts. The Solemn League failed as the colonies were not yet prepared to support such an aggressive form of resistance to British economic constraints. However, the principles expressed in the Solemn League and Covenant later became important components of the framework of American resistance and served as the foundation of the Continental Association, proposed by Warren in June 1774 and adopted by the Continental Congress soon after.[12] The pressures to supplement the economic boycotts fed the calls for an intercolonial congress as general agreement existed that a boycott would not work unless applied uniformly by all colonies. Despite significant opposition in key colonies, all except Georgia appointed delegates and set September 1, 1774, as the start date.[13]

Meanwhile, a Boston town meeting in July 1774 placed Warren and other patriot leaders on a committee to write a response to the new British acts, mirroring the actions of other counties in Massachusetts. Warren's growing influence stemmed from his role in the developing Boston resistance as well as the appointment of better known figures like the Adams cousins to represent the colony in the Continental Congress. Fearful of the growing

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[11] McFarland, 86.

[12] Cary, 140.

[13] Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 467.

influence of radical elements, Governor Gage placed a ban on town meetings.[14] Warren and other Massachusetts leaders circumvented Gage's ban by calling county conventions throughout the colony, an action that the British would not have anticipated as county conventions are foreign to the British political structure. Seven counties held conventions throughout the months of August and September, but most adopted a watchful waiting approach as they cautiously anticipated the deliberations of the approaching Continental Congress.[15] The first of these county meetings took place in Berkshire County on July 6, 1774, and the last major county convention took place in Bristol County on September 28 and 29, 1774.[16] Men gathered from all the towns in each county for their respective conventions. Indications that the Suffolk delegates knew of the activities of neighboring conventions exists within the formal resolves as they specifically noted their support for the county of Essex's call for a Provisional Congress.[17] Every county worked to develop an official response to the latest acts of Parliament. Although each convention adopted separate resolutions, many commonalities existed between the independent conventions' final results, particularly with regard to trade restrictions, opposition to standing armies, and concerns about the judicial system. However, the Suffolk Resolves offered one of the most detailed and articulate statements of grievances.

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[14] Forman, 201.

[15] Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 553; nine counties with the earliest conventions being held in July are noted in Webster and Morris, 5.

[16] William Lincoln, ed., *The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 626, 652. Adobe PDF eBook.

[17] Ibid., 604.

The genesis of the Suffolk Resolves lay with the Boston Committee of Correspondence's call for a meeting of Suffolk County gentlemen to consider an appropriate response to the Coercive Acts. The Boston delegation to the Suffolk meeting, selected by the Committee of Correspondence under the direction of Warren, included him, Benjamin Church, John Pitts, Benjamin Kent, and Oliver Wendell.[18] The first Suffolk meeting commenced on August 16th, but took no real action other than planning for a future meeting on September 6th.[19] Apparently, delegates feared taking decisive action as a number of towns had not yet appointed representatives. They wanted to ensure the fullest possible participation to legitimize their actions.[20] Warren took the lead in planning the Suffolk Convention, but continued to correspond with Samuel Adams during the latter's time in Philadelphia. Adams' role from afar drew comment from contemporaries like Joseph Galloway who saw Adams as managing "at once the faction in Congress at Philadelphia and the faction in New England."[21] Later historians, such as David Ammerman, have debated the topic as well. Ammerman referred to the "conspiratorial hand" of Adams throughout the passage of the Resolves, suggesting that Adams had orchestrated the entire process through

[18] Webster and Morris, 18.

[19] Cary, 149.

[20] Webster and Morris, 6.

[21] Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 495.

backroom channels.[22] T.H. Breen, however, challenged this, arguing that popular radicalism rather than a conspiracy of prominent men dominated the Suffolk Convention.[23]

Simultaneously with the Suffolk Convention, a meeting of delegates from twelve of the colonies convened in Philadelphia. Following the arrival of the Port Bill in May 1774, various colonies requested a congress to discuss policies of resistance from an intercolonial perspective, not just through local efforts. Historian Merrill Jensen described the complexity of this task to create a policy-making body for all of the North American colonies and the precedent it set: "The intricate political maneuvering of American leaders as they brought about an agreement to meet in a congress, and elected delegates to it, resembled in many ways the politics involved in every congressional election from that day to this."[24] The two primary purposes of this body, later known as the First Continental Congress, were to push for the repeal of the Coercive Acts and to end Parliamentary taxation. However, the delegates quickly found themselves confronted with philosophical debates over larger issues of Parliamentary authority in general, as well as specific petitions from the county conventions.

The First Continental Congress, from the beginning, included delegates with varying motives and political views who "were determined to present a united front to the world, no matter how sharply they divided in their secret session."[25] This created an overall body of "predominantly men of moderate ideas and temperate personalities" where only a few had

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[22] Ammerman, 74-75.

[23] Breen, 130.

[24] Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 461.

[25] Ibid., 484.

"abandoned hope of reconciliation," namely delegates such as Samuel Adams, Thomas Mifflin, Richard Henry Lee, Christopher Gadsden, and perhaps John Adams. The remainder of delegates, like Joseph Galloway and other conservatives, wanted "peace and harmony" with the mother country.[26] In fact, many conservatives, notably ones from New York and Philadelphia, had hoped that the First Continental Congress "could be delayed or avoided" altogether.[27] The delegates first met at a tavern in Philadelphia on September 5th and the divide between the patriot and conservative leaders became pronounced. The first two decisions, to meet in Carpenter's Hall as opposed to Galloway's suggestion of the State House and the election of Peyton Randolph, speaker of the Virginia House of Burgesses, as President and appointment of Charles Thomson, a Philadelphia patriot, as Secretary, signaled the first of many victories for patriot leaders, while "mortifying" conservatives.[28] Additionally, the delegates debated and selected a voting system in which each colony received one vote, requiring a simple majority of each colony's delegation.[29]

During the period between the first and second Suffolk meetings and amidst the opening of the Continental Congress, an event known as the Cambridge Powder Alarm heightened tensions. Governor Gage ordered a detachment of British troops into Cambridge to collect a stockpile of gunpowder on September 5, 1774. This movement of forces sent fear throughout Boston and the surrounding areas. As a result, thousands of men from

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[26] Christie and Labaree, 208.

[27] Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 479.

[28] Ibid., 490.

[29] Ibid., 490-491.

Massachusetts and surrounding colonies quickly formed informal militias and converged on Cambridge. The British forces had left the area by the time the militias organized, but the crowd continued to harass royal officials, including the mandamus counselors, leading to the resignation of several mandamus counselors.[30] This spontaneous mobilization, though not called on to fight, sparked confidence that colonists could gather a force of their own to challenge British forces. Knowledge that colonists with no direct stake in Boston's plight rushed "to help strangers who were victims of aggression" encouraged a newfound sense of shared identity.[31]

False rumors of the destruction of Boston as a result of Governor Gage's order spread throughout the colonies. The false reports created concern and heightened fears, while serving as a reminder that any incident could lead to harsh military response.[32] Boston could no longer afford to wait for Congressional deliberations and moved forward with developing their own responses to British actions. In Philadelphia, delegates anxiously awaited news from Boston. In a letter to Abigail Adams on September 18, 1774, John Adams alluded to the tensions in the First Continental Congress created as a direct result of the Cambridge Powder Alarm: "… When the horrid news was brought here of the bombardment of Boston, which made us completely miserable for two days, we saw proofs both of the sympathy and the resolution of the continent. War! War! War! Was the cry, and it was pronounced in a tone

[30] Forman, 210-211.

[31] Breen, 150-151.

[32] Ammerman, 84; Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics,* 44-45.

which would have done honor to the oratory of a Briton or a Roman. If it had proved true, you would have heard the thunder of an American Congress".[33]

The Cambridge Powder Alarm demonstrated the support and commitment of the people of the surrounding areas to Boston. Events such as the Boston Tea Party and the Cambridge Powder Alarm displayed the lengths the people of Massachusetts would take to defend their economic and physical security, but also emboldened other colonists to stand up against British restrictions. It was in this atmosphere that the Suffolk Convention adopted the Resolves and the First Continental Congress took them under advisement. This shifted the tenor of the Suffolk Convention, resulting in a document that crystallized anti-British sentiments and guaranteed a more radical tone.

[33] John Adams to Abigail Adams, September 18, 1774, in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, 34.

CHAPTER III

THE SUFFOLK CONVENTION AND RESOLVES

The Suffolk Convention encompassed nineteen towns from across the entire county with more than seventy total delegates.[1] The delegates were generally selected by special town meetings called for that purpose, and sources indicate that every town and district sent representatives to the September meetings.[2] The September 6th meeting was similar to the first Suffolk Convention meeting; however, extensive planning went into executing this session, including an early draft of the Suffolk Resolves by William Cooper and, presumably, Joseph Warren. Cooper formulated a set of proposed minutes for the September 6th meeting that included a push for bloc-town voting to promote unanimity throughout the convention, followed by a discussion of possible resolves. Warren also promoted a unified voice throughout the convention by creating a committee to consider county policy and placing himself as the chairman.[3] The Suffolk County delegates represented a wide range of professions and occupations suggesting broad representation of the public interest. Attendees included professionals like physicians Joseph Warren and Benjamin Church and lawyers including William Holden and Nathanial Summer. The presence of individuals like Deacon Joseph Palmer indicates the involvement of the county's churchmen in the debates. Millers Edward Preston and James Boise represented the manufacturing sector. Particularly well-

[1] Cary, 153.

[2] Webster and Morris, 17.

[3] Forman, 212-213.

represented were military men including Major Richard Woodward, Colonel Ebenezer Thayer, and Captain Benjamin White.[4] The absence of acknowledged leaders like the Adams cousins and Thomas Cushing, who had been appointed as delegates for Massachusetts to the First Continental Congress, provided unique opportunities for lesser-known men to rise to the forefront.

The Suffolk Convention continued at the home of Daniel Vose, a local West Indian goods merchant and Tavern owner, on September 9th. An early version of the Suffolk Resolves appeared in the minutes of the September 6th meeting, but Warren made significant changes prior to submitting it for discussion during the September 9th meeting.[5] The original draft had been relatively moderate in tone and recommendations, but the revised draft submitted for approval was "designed to express a forthright commitment to a program of resistance" without alienating the other colonies.[6] The authors "fashioned a strategy of civil disobedience, but not passive resistance."[7] The Suffolk convention "staked out an extreme position" in order to combat Parliamentary policy, specifically the Coercive Acts.[8] Delegates approved the Suffolk Resolves on September 9th, but Warren controlled the distribution of the Resolves to the general public by delaying their release to the public and personally

[4] Lincoln, *Journals*, 605.

[5] Forman, 212-213.

[6] Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics*, 46.

[7] Ibid., 47.

[8] Breen, 130.

selecting Paul Revere to deliver them to the First Continental Congress, perhaps to avoid premature exposure to colonial administrators and loyalists.[9]

The text of the document, the sentiments of which are mirrored in the text of other county resolves, reflects tension and frustration of the colonists towards Parliament, while paying lip service to respect for King George III. A newfound assertiveness is expressed throughout the Resolves further illustrating the shift in the mindset of Massachusetts citizens; they now see themselves as the rightful leaders of the colony, not obedient servants of Parliament. The document showcases the progression towards war that began to surface in the colonial American mindset following events like the Cambridge Powder Alarm. The many issues that define the American Revolution, such as taxation without representation, trade interference and right to a fair trial, are extensively highlighted within the Suffolk Resolves. The document defined contentious issues more clearly, helping to crystallize the growing distance between Britain and her American colonies.

The text contains an opening preamble, followed by nineteen specific grievances. The preamble demonstrates the high regard in which Massachusetts held their charter, despite the growth of independent colonial governments. The opening statement is filled with hostile terms directed at British colonial administrators such as: “powerful,” “vengeful,” “arbitrary,” “licentious,” and “parricide.” British administrative personnel are described as “military executioners” and accused of economic exploitation, while their actions are described as “unparalleled usurpation[s] of unconstitutional power.” Warren juxtaposes the strident and exaggerated characterization of the British administrators against the colonists by depicting

[9] Forman, 217.

the latter as “guiltless children” laboring to protect an inheritance built on the “valor and blood” of colonial ancestors. Warren also attacks those who “tamely submit to live, move, and have their being at the arbitrary will of a licentious minister,” describing their position as analogous to that of “voluntary slavery.”[10] These sentiments sparked emotional connections between the colonists, thereby forging common bonds against the British. Warren knew that in order to stand any chance at making an impact on Parliament the colonists would have to put aside their differences and show a united front.

The body of the document contains nineteen grievances or points. Interestingly, the first point emphasizes that loyalty must be maintained to King George III, based on the traditional Lockean concept of the social contract. It acknowledges George III as “our rightful sovereign” and promises allegiance with the understanding that the compact with the original colonists forms the “covenant [which] is the tenure and claim on which are founded our allegiance and submission.”[11] This type of outward adherence to the rule of the monarchy gives the Suffolk Resolves an intermediary position. Colonists had not given up completely on all aspects of their mother country, but they acknowledged the disintegration of relations which had already begun. The expression of loyalty masks deeper discontent highlighted in the second point which stresses the natural right to defend their civil and religious rights and liberties.[12]

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[10] “The Suffolk Resolves,” in William Lincoln, ed., *The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 601-602. Adobe PDF eBook.

[11] Ibid., 602.

[12] Ibid.

Many colonists were most upset with Parliament in 1774 because of the limitations on personal and economic freedoms contained within the Coercive Acts. Because of this, the third and fourth grievances specifically targeted Parliament. The Resolves castigated that body "for blocking up the harbor of Boston, for altering the established form of government in this colony, and for screening the most flagitious violators of the laws of the province from a legal trial," which the delegates deemed as entitlements "by the laws of nature, the British constitution, and the charter of the province."[13] This particular complaint also provides a perfect example of the disconnect between Great Britain and its American colonists. Great Britain was willing to sacrifice revenue to bring the troublesome Bostonians in line, which the colonists saw as a sign of tyranny. In their minds "the attempts of [a] wicked administration to enslave America" freed them from obligations of obedience.[14]

Court and legal issues comprised the fifth through eighth grievances within the Resolves. The court systems and justices had forfeited their legitimacy and authority in the eyes of the colonists. The delegates to the Suffolk Convention considered the justices "unconstitutional officers" who operated under "undue influence" as their illegitimate appointments were not, in colonial minds, consistent with the original charter.[15] This hints at the developing radicalism inherent in the Suffolk Resolves. The Whigs in Massachusetts began to promote the American colonies as separate entities from the mainland of Great Britain. At this stage in colonial history, however, they operated in a transitional space where

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 602-603.

[15] Ibid.

they wanted control of their own affairs, but with continued protection and trade benefits under British law.

The Resolves also suggested aggressive actions in terms of boycotting British trade and calling for certain individuals to resign their public offices, even issuing an ultimatum that those refusing to do so by September 20th would be considered as "obstinate and incorrigible enemies to this country."[16] The colonists took this a step further in the ninth through twelfth grievances by recommending the removal of commissions of militia members and advocating that the inhabitants of the colony should prepare to defend themselves, if it became necessary. These points of protest came in reaction to the increased military presence throughout Massachusetts and the newfound threat towards Protestantism following the protection of the Roman-Catholic religion in Canada. The colonies maintained a defensive posture towards military relations with Britain out of "affection to his majesty" and as long as "such conduct may be vindicated by reason and the principles of self-preservation."[17] This stance further illustrates the transitional nature the Suffolk Resolves held in regards to movement towards revolution.

The thirteenth through nineteenth resolves outline specific measures to create an independent government to combat the "present tyrannical and unconstitutional government." The Resolves present an ultimatum to British authorities, threatening that in the event of a resistance leader's arrest, colonists would take royal officials hostage until

[16] Ibid., 604.

[17] Ibid.

those seized by the British were freed. A call for Anglo-American trade cessation and the development of American art and manufacturing to offset this boycott of British goods constituted the next step in the Resolves' plan. The sixteenth and seventeenth grievances supported and encouraged other towns and counties to support the Provincial Congress, meeting later in October, and the currently sitting Continental Congress. Finally, in an effort to counteract the surge of mob-like activities and riots and to allow the colonial elites to reassert their leadership of the resistance, the Resolves called for civil order, particularly the protection of private property.[18]

The content and sentiments of the Suffolk Resolves clearly resonated with other colonial gatherings. The minutes from the Bristol Convention suggest that the way in which Suffolk County responded to British policies in their "spirited and noble resolutions" echoed their own feelings. The Bristol County convention "cheerfully" adopted the Suffolk Resolves within their own resolutions.[19] The Cumberland Convention demonstrated the same support to Suffolk County as leaders in this challenge to British policy, while also showing awareness of differences between their two situations: "And here we think it proper to observe, that though we do not coincide in every instance with our Suffolk brethren, which may be owing to a want of knowing all the circumstances of affairs, yet we highly applaud their virtuous zeal and determined resolution."[20]

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[18] Ibid., 604-605.

[19] Ibid., 627.

[20] Ibid., 658.

On September 10th, Warren sent a copy of the document to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia with his trusted ally, Paul Revere. In terms of content, the Suffolk Resolves were similar to the other county resolutions, though more fully developed than most. They were not the first set of resolutions to arrive from Massachusetts; Middlesex County sent a copy of their proceedings three days earlier. However, the Suffolk Resolves were the only resolutions brought to a vote before the Congress. Thomas Cushing, a delegate from Massachusetts, suggested one reason as to why Congress agreed to address the Suffolk Resolves directly in a letter addressed to Richard Devens and Isaac Foster, Jr. on September 19, 1774. According to Cushing, "the Congress were very Busy & several large Committees were closely engaged upon matters of great importance" when the Middlesex resolutions arrived.[21] More importantly, the heightened tension created by the false rumors following the Cambridge Powder Alarm would have made Boston's pleas seem more urgent. The fact that Boston, the most threatened city, was part of Suffolk County insured that Congress would be more receptive to that county's pleas.[22] A letter penned by Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee to his brother William on September 20, 1774, speaks of hearing of the Alarm and the respect delegates held for the preparedness of so many to die for the cause.[23] Samuel Seabury, a prominent loyalist, also highlighted the significance of the Cambridge Powder

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[21] Thomas Cushing to Richard Devens and Isaac Foster, Jr., September 19, 1774 in *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Paul H. Smith, et al., v. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1976-2000), 84-85.

[22] Ammerman, 75.

[23] Richard Henry Lee to William Lee, September 20, 1774, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 88-89.

Alarm, commenting that "It served also to inflame the congress and to prepare the way for another Boston maneuvere [sic]."[24] During his discussion of the proceedings of the Congress, Seabury asserted that "Their [the Philadelphia delegates] passions were up, their reason disturbed, their judgment distorted; with the most inconsiderate rashness they took the fatal step of adopting a resolution 'approving and recommending' the conduct of the Suffolk people."[25]

The importance placed on the Resolves may also have resulted from a strategic decision to frame their transmission to the Continental Congress as seeking advice. The Suffolk Resolves reached the Congress later, but leaders enclosed a letter with "an express application to the Congress for advice."[26] Therefore, they would both flatter the delegates of the First Continental Congress, while forcing their hand and causing them to take a stand. This introductory letter and request for action, coupled with the tensions over the Powder Alarm, created a sense of urgency in Congress. Historian Ray Raphael touches upon the subject of flattery in terms of the Resolves being crafted with flair that would impress the "learned delegates" more than other more mundane documents.[27] Perhaps most important is that the Suffolk Resolves were more thoroughly developed and rationally argued than those

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[24] Samuel Seabury, *The Congress Canvassed: Or, an Examination Into the Conduct of the Delegates, at Their Grand Convention, Held in Philadelphia, Sept. 1, 1774. Addressed to the Merchants of New-York* (London: Richardson and Urquhart, 1775), 12, Adobe PDF eBook.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Cushing to Devens and Foster, *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 84-85.

[27] Raphael, 157.

of other counties. They offered the most detailed and articulate statement of colonial grievances.

Regardless of the reasons, the Philadelphia delegates brought the Suffolk Resolves to the floor for consideration. The resolutions proved to be a divisive issue for the First Continental Congress and quickly became central to the larger ideological divide. Radicals like Christopher Gadsen, a noted South Carolina delegate and an extreme patriot, wanted a preemptive attack before Britain could reinforce troops.[28] The conservative members, like Galloway, still hoped for peaceful reconciliation, causing them to question the entire nature of the Continental Congress. In his 1779 pamphlet *Letters to a Nobleman, On the Conduct of the War in the Middle Colonies*, Galloway challenged the supposed popular support of the Continental Congress, pointing out that in some colonies many of the government officers were either leaders of the patriot faction or secretly supported it.[29] In his thinking, the Continental Congress constituted an illegitimate body as it undermined the authority of the legitimate colonial assemblies.[30] He argued that calling a Continental Congress violated "those rights which they complained of in others" and that the "violent few proceeded to chuse [sic] their Committees and Conventions, and these to chuse [sic] their Delegates in

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[28] Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: the American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 252.

[29] Joseph Galloway, *Letters to a Nobleman, On the Conduct of the War in the Middle Colonies*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Wilkie, 1779), 17. Adobe PDF eBook. No proof of any coercion exists and Galloway's claims have largely been discredited by historians.

[30] Ibid., 13.

Congress."[31] He further claimed that the instructions of the First Continental Congress only authorized measures which supported "allegiance to their Sovereign, and that tended to unite, and not to separate the two countries," [32] thus making their consideration of the Suffolk Resolves also illegitimate.

Nonetheless, Galloway and others found themselves forced into taking a stand on the specific issue of the Suffolk Resolves. The conservative members expressed shock and viewed the proposed adoption of the Resolves as essentially asking them to condone open rebellion and, potentially, military resistance. They found themselves caught in a dilemma, which Galloway later claimed resulted from coercion and fear of retribution from Adams' mob.[33] Galloway's 1780 pamphlet *Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion*, defended the reputations of himself and other loyalist members of the Congress by recounting "long and warm debate" of the meetings and discrediting the notion of unanimity in regard to the validation of the Suffolk Resolves.[34] He suggested that the presumed unanimity was in fact coerced, claiming that Sam Adams' group operated as a "mob, ready to execute their secret orders" through the "cruel practice of tarring and feathering." He further claimed that two dissenting members "presumed to offer their protest against it in writing, which was negative" and the Congress denied the request

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[31] Ibid., 14.

[32] Ibid., 15.

[33] Joseph Galloway, *Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion* (London: G. Wilkie, 1780), 29. Adobe PDF eBook.

[34] Ibid., 69.

that "their protest and its negative should be entered on the minutes."[35] Historian Ray Raphael denies the charges of coercion made by Galloway and claims that the conservatives' votes more likely represent an acceptance that the tide had turned and a fear of being branded traitors if they appeared to be supporting the unpopular Coercive Acts. Rejecting the Resolves would imply agreement with British policy.[36]

While individuals within colonial delegations may have opposed the endorsement of the Suffolk Resolves, official records indicate that Congress unanimously approved these resolutions as each colony voted as a unit. It took several weeks of debate to bridge this ideological divide and to many the Suffolk Resolves seemed an acceptable middle ground between Galloway and Gadsden.[37] The Congressional endorsement effectively undermined the more conservative Galloway Plan, which came before the Congress on September 17, 1774, and served as "an indication of success of hardliners at the First Continental Congress."[38] The delegates did, however, urge caution and temperance, supporting only defensive actions in an effort to give Congress time to negotiate with Britain to seek changes in policy. The Resolves could thus be seen as a compromise, preventing the possibility of a situation in which radicals like Gadsden would support a military attack before the British

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Raphael, 157; Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 495.

[37] Smith, *A New Age Now Begins*, 434.

[38] Richard Middleton, *Colonial America: A History, 1565-1776*, 3rd (Maiden: Blackwell, 2002), 472-473. For more information on the Galloway Plan, see Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 498-500.

could call in reinforcements.[39] This approach satisfied the patriots, while easing conservative concerns.[40] The delegates hoped to prevent further disruption in New England, while sending a message to the British government that punitive actions to attempt to regain control of the situation would not be tolerated.[41]

Additionally, the Congress, in what John Adams referred to as an unusual display of public transparency, opted to break with their previous secrecy policy by ordering the Resolves to be printed in local newspapers.[42] The Resolves made page one news as seen in a special September 15, 1774 *Supplement to the Massachusetts Gazette*, the *Essex Gazette* of September 20, 1774, and the *New Hampshire Gazette* of September 23, 1774.[43] The November 1774 issue of London's *Gentleman's Magazine* published excerpts from the "Debates in the House of Commons," including a report entitled "Account of the Proceedings of the American Colonies since the passing [of] the Boston Port Bill," accompanied by a

[39] Middlekauff, 252.

[40] Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 555.

[41] Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics*, 47.

[42] John Adams to Abigail Adams, September 18, 1774, in *Letters of Members of the First Continental Congress*, 35.

[43] *Supplement to the Massachusetts Gazette,* September 15, 1774, 1-2, http://www.masshist.org/revolution/doc-viewer.php?old=18mode=nav&item_id=736 (accessed December 1, 2014); *The Essex Gazette*, September 20, 1774, 1, http://www.masshist.org/dorr/volume/4/sequence/802; *The New Hampshire Gazette*, September 23, 1774 in Todd Andrlik, *Reporting the Revolutionary War: Before It Was History, It Was News.* (Naperville: Sourcebooks, 2012), 102-104.

paraphrased version of the Suffolk Resolves.[44] General Gage later sent his superiors in England a copy of the Resolves along with the Declaration of Rights and Grievances in late 1774.[45]

Following the First Continental Congress' decision to endorse the Suffolk Resolves, the majority, on both sides, was no longer prepared to compromise.[46] Additionally, as Revolutionary War archivist and author Todd Andrlik argued, "by sanctioning the Resolves, Congress supported deeds as well as words. It vowed to stand behind a revolution that was in full swing throughout Massachusetts."[47] Furthermore, the Resolves contributed to the unity or "Common Cause" of the colonies because the approval essentially condoned measures the colonists knew Britain would view as treasonous.[48] It also strengthened the resolve of the British cabinet; despite their promise to consider the actions of the First Continental Congress that was never a possibility. As Lord Dartmouth realized, retreat was not an option.[49]

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[44] *Gentleman's Magazine* (London), November 1774 http://www.rarenewspapers.com/view/559395?imagelist=1 (accessed December 1, 2014).

[45] Donoughue, 219.

[46] Gipson, 251.

[47] Andrlik, 99.

[48] Ammerman, 93.

[49] Ibid., 131-132.

CHAPTER IV

CONTEMPORARY RESPONSE

The Continental Congress' endorsement of the Resolves prompted strong reactions in both American and British circles. Early historians shed light on the collective response to the endorsement. Mercy Otis Warren, a supporter of the American Revolution, argued that the treasonous sentiments contained in the Suffolk Resolves reflected the mindset of the colonists as a whole, not just those of Massachusetts.[1] David Ramsey, another American sympathizer and historian who saw his writings as "a vehicle for fostering nationhood," expressed similar observations towards the passage of the Suffolk Resolves as Warren.[2] Ramsay described the passage of the Resolves by the First Continental Congress as an event which allowed the people of Massachusetts to "determine what support they might expect" and stated that the endorsement of the resolutions in the end surpassed the expectations of the inhabitants of Suffolk County. He further asserted that this brought legitimacy and confidence to the actions of Massachusetts, encouraging further resistance.[3] Although the accounts of these early American historians shed light on the outlook of pro-revolutionary segments of the populace in response to the Suffolk Resolves, Warren and Ramsay completed their works following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. Therefore, other

[1] Warren, 160-161.

[2] Ramsay, xv.

[3] Ibid., 119-120.

sources of direct responses to the endorsement of the Resolves offer a better depiction of the contemporary reaction to this event both in America and Britain.

The most immediate reactions can be seen in the letters and writings of delegates to the First Continental Congress, which provide insight into the responses of prominent, politically active citizens. The delegates clearly recognized the importance of the Resolves. Comments range from simple mentions of Congress' actions to passionate statements regarding the proceedings and the Suffolk Resolves. A letter from George Read, a member of the Delaware delegation, to his wife Gertrude Read on September 18, 1774, reflected the sense of urgency that delegates felt and a realization of the importance of the moment. He informed his wife that he regretted not being able to visit with her, but that he was nonetheless glad that he had remained in Philadelphia as two major points of discussion occurred "in consequence of an application from Boston to the Congress for their advice upon the late measures of General Gage." Read clearly saw these two matters, the passage of the Suffolk Resolves and a resolution for further colonial support of Boston, as quite significant as he stated that he would have blamed himself had he not been there to participate in the discussion.[4]

Richard Henry Lee, an influential delegate from Virginia, in a letter addressed to his brother, William Lee, on September 20, 1774, noted that the Suffolk Resolves received "concurring support" for Boston and Massachusetts as a whole.[5] He understood that recent

[4] George Read to Gertrude Read, September 18, 1774, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress*.

[5] Richard Henry Lee to William Lee, September 20, 1774, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress.*

events showed that "no small difficulty will attend forcing submission from these people, and they are most firmly resolved to dye [sic] rather than submit to the change of the Government."

Two dispatches from delegates from Connecticut show that contemporary participants considered the Suffolk Resolves as important business of the First Continental Congress and recognized it as a unifying measure. A group of delegates from Connecticut sent a letter to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., governor of the Connecticut colony, on October 10, 1774, which stated that the Suffolk Resolves were "highly approved of & applauded."[6] Silas Deane, another prominent delegate representing Connecticut, wrote to Thomas Mumford, Connecticut merchant and member of the Council of Safety, on October 16, 1774, that through the adoption of resolutions, such as the Suffolk Resolves, the Continental Congress made the "Cause of Boston" a "Common Cause."[7]

Not surprisingly two prominent delegates from Massachusetts recorded immediate responses to the Suffolk Resolves as well. John Adams penned a diary entry on September 17, 1774, remarking on the adoption of the Resolves by the First Continental Congress and the sense of unity its endorsement represented. He wrote, "This was one of the happiest Days of my Life. In Congress We had generous, noble Sentiments, and manly Eloquence. This

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[6] Connecticut Delegates to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., October 10, 1774, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress.*

[7] Silas Deane to Thomas Mumford, October 16, 1774, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress.*

Day convinced me that America will support the Massachusetts [sic] or perish with her."[8] However, in a letter to Abigail Adams, he hinted at the overarching divisions which existed in the First Continental Congress under the supposed unanimity. He recorded that he witnessed "tears gush into the eyes of the pacifist Pennsylvania Quakers."[9] Samuel Adams, who had been heavily involved through communications with his protégé Joseph Warren throughout the development of the Suffolk Resolves, wrote to Warren shortly after the Resolves reached the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Adams remarked on September 19, 1774, that the "spirited and Patriotick [sic] Resolves" of Suffolk County "were read with great applause, and the Enclosed Resolutions were unanimously passed, which give you a faint idea of the spirit of Congress."[10] However, Samuel Adams did not limit his excitement over the passage of the Resolves to only Warren. In a letter to Boston Congregationalist minister Charles Chauncy also dated September 19, 1774, Adams used essentially the same language.[11] Together, the letters to Warren and Chauncy indicate Samuel Adams' recognition that the passage of the Resolves marked a shift in the spirit of the Congress.

Samuel Adams continued to communicate with Warren through various letters, further revealing his sense that the Suffolk Resolves had forever altered political discourse. He suggested that the passage of the Resolves had altered intercolonial relations and created

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[8] John Adams, *Diary*, September 17, 1774, in *Letters of Members of the First Continental Congress*, 34.

[9] John Adams to Abigail Adams, September 18, 1774, in *Letters of Members of the First Continental Congress*, 35.

[10] Samuel Adams to Joseph Warren, September 19, 1774, in Cushing, 2:156.

[11] Samuel Adams to Charles Chauncy, September 19, 1774, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress.*

resentment.[12] In a letter of September 25, 1774, Adams apprised Warren of fears of some of the delegates that Massachusetts aimed for true independence, not just independence from Britain. Adams wrote: "There is, however, a certain degree of jealousy in the minds of some, that we aim at a total independency, not only of the mother-country, but of the colonies too; and that, as we are hardy and brave people, we shall have in time overrun them all."[13]

The excitement originally produced by the adoption of the Resolves among Massachusetts leaders proved to be short lived, as evidenced by a letter from John Adams to Joseph Palmer, Boston glassmaker and later member of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, on September 26, 1774. John Adams related his frustration with Congress for applauding the Resolves, but not following through. He complained of being told to "stand still, bear, with patience, if you come to a rupture with the troops, all is lost." He further informed Palmer that the delegates found any notion of independence to be startling.[14] That frustration is further shown in a letter written three days later to Boston lawyer William Tudor, asserting that Congress praised "our wisdom, fortitude, and temperance," while taking no action.[15] Nonetheless, these dispatches from the Adams cousins to multiple Boston leaders illustrate the importance they placed on ensuring that their home colony knew of the support

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[12] Forman, 218.

[13] Samuel Adams to Joseph Warren, September 25, 1774, in Cushing, 2: 156.

[14] John Adams to Joseph Palmer, September 26, 1774, quoted in Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 501.

[15] John Adams to William Tudor, September 29, 1174, quoted in Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 501.

granted by the First Continental Congress, but also warned of the concerns the majority of the Congress had with the potential for full independence it foreshadowed.

While patriot leaders like the Adams cousins welcomed the approval of the Suffolk Resolves and its acknowledgement of a common cause in resisting British policy, not everyone agreed. Loyalist sentiments remained strong and significantly impacted the colonial discourse. As T.H. Breen has argued, "Americans of loyalist persuasion wondered whether the Philadelphia delegates had taken leave of their senses." One critic observed, half "of America shudder [ed]."[16] To loyalists, whether delegate or concerned citizen, the Suffolk Resolves threatened division rather than promoting unity.

Joseph Galloway, a moderate delegate (and later loyalist) from Pennsylvania to the First Continental Congress, vehemently opposed the Suffolk Resolves and served as one of the leading conservative voices. In a letter of November 1, 1774, addressed to Thomas Nickleson, Galloway's brother-in-law, Galloway wrote: "You will no doubt see the Resolves of our Congress and their other Proceedings. I cannot say that I approve of them, they are too warm & indiscreet and in my Opinion have not pursued the right Path to an Accommodation. All the Violent Parts of them I strenuously oppose from Conscience & Judgment and because I was convinced they must widen the Differences between us."[17] In Galloway's opinion, the endorsement of the Suffolk Resolves along with other actions of Congress illustrated that the

[16] Breen, 130-132.

[17] Joseph Galloway to Thomas Nickleson, November 1, 1774, *Letters of Delegates to Congress*.

delegates had "violated" the trust of their constituents and pushed the people into an armed confrontation.[18]

Galloway's sentiments did not improve with time. In the 1780 pamphlet *Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion,* he discussed the impact of the Suffolk Resolves in greater detail. He described them as "inflammatory resolves... which contained a complete declaration of war against Great-Britain [sic]." He continued with a condensed description of the "treasonable" contents of the Resolves. Galloway took the issue of endorsement of the Suffolk Resolves a step further than in his previous pamphlets by arguing that the "treasonable vote" of the First Continental Congress laid the foundation of military resistance throughout America."[19] From that point, he believed that the loyalists had little hope of stemming the tide and switched his focus to trying to ensure that the separation from Great Britain yielded a system built on constitutional principles and working toward a reconciliation of the two countries.[20] Galloway ended this pamphlet by illuminating the connection between the passage of the Suffolk Resolves and the events of Lexington and Concord, stating that "the militia in New England become embodied, in pursuance of the recommendation of the Suffolk resolve, and magazines of warlike stores were laid up to be ready for their use. To seize one of these magazines General

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[18] Galloway, *Letters to a Nobleman, On the Conduct of the War in the Middle Colonies,* 17.

[19] Galloway, *Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion,* 68.

[20] Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 498.

Gage sent out a party, which was attacked by the militia at Lexington."[21] In essence, Galloway situated the beginning of the conflict not in the events of Lexington and Concord, but in the endorsement of the Suffolk Resolves.

Galloway's sentiments are echoed in the writings of Samuel Seabury, a New York loyalist and Anglican clergyman. He served as one of the first pamphlet writers to attack the actions of the First Continental Congress. He produced four pamphlets between November 1774 and January 1775 urging the rejection of policies adopted by the Congress.[22] In *The Congress Canvassed: Or, An Examination into the Conduct of the Delegates, At Their Grand Convention,* Seabury pointed out many of the same issues with the proceedings of the First Continental Congress as Galloway. However, unlike Galloway, Seabury completed his response within a few months of the actual meeting. Seabury argued that instead of unifying the colonies and the motherland, Congress made the "breach with the parent state a thousand times more irreparable than it was before." He used the adoption of the Suffolk Resolves as an example of colonial policies which "tend to raise jealousies, to excite animosities, to foment discords between us [the colonies] and our mother country," while offering no "peace and reconciliation."[23] Seabury also referred to the surprise felt by many of the loyalist persuasion at the actions of the First Continental Congress: "Their characters, their stations, their abilities…all concurred to raise my expectations that they would have been of principal

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[21] Galloway, *Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 95.

[22] Merrill Jensen, *Tracts of the American Revolution 1763-1776* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), vii.

[23] Seabury, 5.

advantage in the congress, by moderating and keeping within the bounds the fiery intemperate zeal, which it was too apparent, many of the Delegates carried with them to that assembly. Cruelly was I disappointed, when the account was confirmed, that the congress had unanimously adopted the Suffolk Resolves."[24] Seabury, along with other loyalists, felt the adoption of the radical Suffolk Resolves effectively limited the influence of more moderate delegates. Another prominent New York loyalist, Myles Cooper, expressed similar discontent in *A Friendly Address to All Reasonable Republicans,* referring to the Resolves as the work of "rebellious Republicans" and claiming "that the people of Suffolk had OPENLY REVOLTED FROM THEIR ALLEGIANCE to the King and his government."[25]

Thomas Bradbury Chandler, a New Jersey Anglican clergyman, offered a more extreme viewpoint on loyalist discontent towards the actions of the First Continental Congress, specifically in regards to the actions of the delegates and people of Massachusetts, in pamphlets published in 1774 and early 1775. In *A Friendly Address to All Reasonable Americans, on the Subject of our Political Confusions,* Chandler provided his opinion of the Bostonians and leaders of the Massachusetts delegation: "they must be viewed in the light of *vanquished rebels,* and treated accordingly. Their leaders must be given up into the executioner's hands; confiscations of their estates forfeited by rebellion, must follow, and all

[24] Ibid., 5-6.

[25] Quoted in Breen, 131.

must be left at the mercy of their vanquishers."[26] Chandler echoed the sentiments of Seabury in regard to the Continental Congress' failure to live up to his expectations, nothing that "the Gentlemen of the Congress, in whom we confided as the faithful guardians of the *safety* as well as *rights of America*, were *disposed* to enter into a league offensive and defensive with its *worst enemies* the *New England* and other *Presbyterian* Republicans." He continued that "The fact is notorious to the world; it can neither be denied nor palliated; for they hastily and eagerly published…their cordial approbation of the *Suffolk Resolves* for erecting an *Independent Government* in *New-England*."[27] Chandler viewed the endorsement of the Suffolk Resolves as the event which shifted everything from bad to worse, going so far as to say that "a rebellion is *evidently commenced* in *New England*, in the county of *Suffolk*, without room for retreating."[28]

Chandler's *What Think Ye of the Congress Now?* offered further commentary on the significance of the Suffolk Resolves from the viewpoint of a prominent loyalist. He provided a brief summary of the Resolves themselves and stated that they contained the ingredients of a "DECLARATION of INDEPENDENCY."[29] Furthermore, Chandler reiterated his earlier claim that the passage of the Resolves amounted to "an open revolt and rebellion"

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[26] Thomas Bradbury Chandler, *A Friendly Address to All Reasonable Americans, on the Subject of our Political Confusions: In which the Necessary Consequences of Violently Opposing the King's Troops, and of a General Non-Importation, are Fairly Stated* (London: Richardson and Urquhart, 1774), 27. Adobe PDF eBook.

[27] Ibid., 30-31.

[28] Ibid., 27.

[29] Thomas Bradbury Chandler, *What Think Ye of the Congress Now*? (London: Richardson and Urquhart, 1775), 28-29. Adobe PDF eBook.

germinating from the "people of Suffolk."[30] As soon as the First Continental Congress "received by express, an authentic copy of the above-mentioned *Suffolk Resolves*, they broke through all their rules of secrecy, and, at once, gave such a blast from the trumpet of sedition, as made one half of America shudder."[31] He further claimed that "they [the First Continental Congress] ought to have sent back [the Suffolk Resolves] with indignation and abhorrence."[32] Chandler, like many other loyalists, saw the adoption of the Resolves as the event which started open rebellion and believed that it did not reflect the interests of the colonies as a whole.

Word of the passage of the Suffolk Resolves spread widely due to the decree of the Continental Congress that they be published in newspapers, which allowed for responses from those outside formal political circles. For instance, when officers of the Dunmore's War campaign received word of the Suffolk Resolves, they adopted the Fort Gower Resolutions, "their own bold assertion of colonial rights and complaints."[33]

As colonial media historian David Copeland shows, colonial newspapers primarily addressed local concerns or issues and events that directly impacted the local population.[34] Therefore, the printing of the Suffolk Resolves in colonies beyond Massachusetts suggests

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[30] Ibid., 31.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Harry M. Ward, *Major General Adam Stephen and the Cause of American Liberty* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989), 112.

[34] David A. Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers: Characters and Content* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 27.

that they were considered to be of wide significance. Newspapers such as the *Virginia Gazette,* the *Pennsylvania Packet,* the *Massachusetts Gazette,* the *Essex Gazette,* the *New Hampshire Gazette,* and the *Maryland Gazette* either reprinted the Suffolk Resolves entirely following their adoption by the First Continental Congress or included excerpts of Gage's reactions to such events.[35] In many instances, the Suffolk Resolves graced the front page, further testifying to the interest in the document. However, the papers generally simply included the text or key points without comment.

British commentators reacted strongly to the adoption of the Suffolk Resolves by the First Continental Congress, offering more in-depth commentary than American newspapers. *The Annual Register* of London (a yearly compilation of critical world events) presented the fortification of Boston and the Cambridge Powder Alarm as creating "the most violent and universal ferment that had yet be known" and influencing the Suffolk Convention to endorse stronger measures than any previous attempt at protesting the actions of Parliament.[36] Additionally, *The Annual Register* noted various county conventions throughout the American colonies, pointing out that "They all agreed in the main points, of holding a

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[35] *The Virginia Gazette,* October 6, 1774, 2, http://www.newspapers.com/image/40481919; *The Pennsylvania Packet,* September 19, 1774, 4, http://www.newspapers.com/image/39413009; *The Maryland Gazette,* September 29, 1774, 2, http://www.newspapers.com/image/41045123/?terms=; *Supplement to the Massachusetts Gazette,* September 15, 1774, 1-2, http://www.masshist.org/revolution/doc-viewer.php?old=18mode=nav&item_id=736 (accessed December 1, 2014); *The Essex Gazette,* September 20, 1774, 1, http://www.masshist.org/dorr/volume/4/sequence/802; *The New Hampshire Gazette,* September 23, 1774, in Todd Andrlik, *Reporting the Revolutionary War: Before It Was History, It Was News.* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2012), 102-104.

[36] *The Annual Register, or a View of the History Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1775 ,* 18.

congress, of not submitting to the payment of any internal taxes, that were not, as usual, imposed by their own assemblies, and of suspending all commerce with the mother country, until the American grievances in general, and those of Massachusetts-Bay in particular, were fully redressed."[37]

The Annual Register also provided a summary of Gage's response and delivered interesting commentary on the aftermath in Boston of these actions, "Those of Boston, either were, or pretended to be, under continual terror, from the apprehensions of immediate danger, to their lives. They were in the hands of an armed force whom they abhorred, and who equally detested them… Each side professed the best intentions in the world for itself, and shewed [sic] the greatest suspicion of the other."[38] The publishers of *The Annual Register* considered the attempt of merging varying colonial interests into one unified body through the First Continental Congress "undoubtedly a dangerous experiment to bring matters to this crisis" and questioned the need for secrecy.[39] Since the Declaration of Rights and Grievances, a considerably milder set of resolutions, was described as a document that "rather reproaches us [the British] with a shameful degeneracy,"[40] the harsher Suffolk Resolves would likely have drawn similar sentiments. The Suffolk Resolves were reprinted, sometimes even separately from the other proceedings of the First Continental Congress, in a number of newspapers, including the *Gentleman's Magazine, London Evening Post, The*

[37] Ibid., 13.

[38] Ibid., 22.

[39] Ibid., 23, 25.

[40] Ibid., *30.*

Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser, and *The Southampton Hampshire Chronicle*.[41] An unidentified newspaper report claimed that British "friends of America" would take comfort in knowing that endorsement of the Resolves "confounded the ministry, as by it they perceive the Union of the Colonies to be complete."[42]Although little commentary was included with the reprints, the fact that a group of county-level colonial resolutions made the British news suggests their significance in the eyes of at least some segments of the British public.

British officials, in a variety of capacities, commented directly on the Suffolk Resolves, expressing great alarm at the outright rebellion they saw in the resolutions. Massachusetts Governor Thomas Gage received an address, in addition to a copy of the Suffolk Resolves, from the Suffolk Convention, printed in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* on September 21, 1774. This address requested Gage's comment on the Suffolk Resolves and again reiterated that "the people of this county are by no means disposed to injure his Majestytroops [sic]; they think themselves aggrieved and oppressed by the late acts of Parliament, and are resolved, by Divine assistance, never to submit to them, but have no

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[41] *London Evening Post,* October 29, 1774, 2, http://newspaperarchive.com/uk/middlesex/london/london-evening-post/1774/10-29/; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser,* October 30, 1774, 4, http://newspaperarchive.com/uk/middlesex/london/morning-chronicle-and-london-advertiser/1774/10-31/; *Southampton Hampshire Chronicle,* November 7, 1774, 1, http://newspaperarchive.com/uk/hampshire/southampton/southampton-hampshire-chronicle/1774/11-07/; *Gentleman's Magazine* (London), November 1774, http://www.rarenewspapers.com/view/559395?imagelist=1 (accessed December 1, 2014).

[42] Quoted in Teele, 423.

inclination to commence a war with his Majestytroops [sic]."[43] Gage submitted a short response on September 15,1774, printed in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* on September 28, 1774. Gage attempted to smooth things over by defending the "general good behavior" of the soldiers and questioning the removal of guns "privately in the night from the battery in Charlestown" by Boston citizens. He further stated, "The refusing submission to the late acts of Parliament, I find general throughout the province, and I shall lay the same before his Majesty."[44] The Suffolk Convention responded once more by providing clear examples of abuse by the troops and reiterating the need for the reopening of the port "as nature has formed it" and arguing that "the most hounourable method of making them [the colonists] secure and safe, will be to give the people of the province the strongest proof that no design is forming against their liberties."[45] John Richard Alden, a biographer of Gage, described the Governor as "polite and gracious to delegations" from Suffolk County and said he "displayed prudence and coolness" towards the colonists during the situation.[46] Bernard Donoughue claimed that "Gage's dispatches revealed that the Commander-In-Chief's morale was ebbing."[47] In his private letters to Lord Barrington, Secretary of War, in the last four months

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[43] *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 21, 1774, http://www.newspapers.com/search/#offset=20&ymd-start=1774-09-05&ymd-end=1774-11-30&p_place=PA.

[44] *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 28, 1774, http://www.newspapers.com/search/#offset=20&ymd-start=1774-09-05&ymd-end=1774-11-30&p_place=PA.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Alden, 218.

[47] Donoughue, 209-210.

of 1774, Gage sounds like a prophet of doom in describing the changes in American affairs. On September 25, 1774, Gage wrote that the Americans had taken the Coercive Acts as a challenge and remarked on November 2, 1774, that the colonists would rather fight than give in.[48] On September 17, 1774, in a letter to Thomas Hutchinson, Gage urged the government to suspend the Coercive Acts and ask Massachusetts to send emissaries to London in an attempt to alleviate the issues illustrated in the Suffolk Resolves. Otherwise, he stated he would need 20,000 additional troops to end the rebellion.[49]

Governor Gage's predecessor, Thomas Hutchinson, also reacted directly to the endorsement of the Suffolk Resolves. Upon hearing of the news, he commented that the vote was "more alarming than anything which has yet been done." Bernard Bailyn, in *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson,* argues that the passage of the Resolves transformed Hutchinson's world – the plan he had worked out was "now totally irrelevant."[50] Hutchinson is quoted as stating that the passage of the Suffolk Resolves "are enough to put it out of my power to make any accommodation."[51] He further recounted meeting with Lord Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and John Pownall, the Undersecretary of State for the American Department, in London and finding them "thunderstruck" by the news.[52] Hutchinson said of the issues between Britain and her colonies following the actions of the First Continental

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[48] Alden, 219.

[49] Thomas Gage to Thomas Hutchinson, September 17, 1774, quoted in Alden, 220.

[50] Bailyn, 304.

[51] Thomas Hutchinson, quoted in Bailyn, 304.

[52] Quoted in Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation,* 571.

Congress that "so important an affair has not come before Parl [sic] since the [Glorious] Revolution" and commented that the "hostile Resolves of the Congress of Philadelphia had taken the English people by surprise."[53] In a November 1, 1774 diary entry, Hutchinson further described the arrival of the Suffolk Resolves as pushing him to a point where "It is out of my power any longer to promote a plan of conciliation." He recounted Lord Dartmouth saying "if these Resolves of your people are to be depended on, they have declared War against us: they will not suffer any sort of Treaty."[54] Hutchinson further remarked that "all plans of that sort [reconciliation] are now at an end, or at least, suspended."[55]

Accounts of other British officials reflect similar sentiments. According to John Pownall's notes of a Cabinet meeting on December 18, 1774, Attorney General Thurlow and Soliciter General Wedderburn characterized the Suffolk Resolves as "treasonous."[56] Lord Dartmouth commented on the Suffolk Resolves' adoption, declaring that, in his view, this confirmed that the British government could not retreat. He condemned the signers as guilty of treason and called for their vigorous punishment.[57] On November 19, 1774, in response to a series of letters and correspondence received from Governor Gage, King George III wrote

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[53] Peter Orlando Hutchinson, ed., *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1884), 282, Adobe PDF eBook.

[54] Ibid., 284.

[55] Ibid., 286.

[56] Quoted in Neil L. York, "Imperial Impotence: Treason in 1774 Massachusetts," *Law and History Review* 29, no. 3 (August 2011): 689.

[57] Ammerman, 130.

to Lord North describing the colonists as "ripe for mischief" and Gage's recommendation of suspending Parliamentary acts as preposterous. He stated that Britain "must either master them or totally leave them to themselves and treat them as aliens."[58]

This commentary indicated that on both sides of the Atlantic, politicians and the general public at the very least knew that the Suffolk Resolves played a significant role in increasing tensions between Great Britain and the American colonies. They recognized the impact the adoption of the Resolves had on furthering the divide between the mother country and colonies. While Americans remained divided on the extent of the breach, British officials saw that conciliation was no longer an option.

[58] W. Bodham Donne, ed., *The Correspondence of King George the Third with Lord North from 1768 to 1783,* Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1867), 216.

CONCLUSION

The Suffolk Resolves and their endorsement by the First Continental Congress played a pivotal role in the formation of a unified resistance to British policy and served as a precursor to the American Revolution. Drafted in the aftermath of the punitive Coercive Acts, the Resolves reflected the growing discontent of American colonists who felt both limited and threatened by Parliamentary attempts to restore control and extract revenue from her distant colonies. The Suffolk Resolves furthered the divide between the mother country and colonies and forced issues into the open.

The Resolves offered a well-reasoned, detailed program of resistance expressed in eloquent language. Their message of respectful, but determined, disagreement framed in Lockean language of natural rights and consensual contracts resonated with fellow colonists and served to crystallize opposition to British policy into a more unified voice. In this sense they served as a transitional catalyst for revolution by uniting the colonies in a way rarely seen before.

By presenting their grievances to the First Continental Congress as a request for advice, the authors of the document galvanized that body into action, forcing them to take a stand on the immediate crisis in Boston and the deeper rift in Anglo-American relations. The First Continental Congress' endorsement of the Resolves shifted the tone away from conservative requests for greater consideration to more forceful demands for protection from parliamentary misdeeds, greater control over internal affairs, and threats of armed action in defense of their rights. This gave more radical elements the momentum within the Congress

and diminished chances of compromise. The endorsement signaled a recognition of common grievances and united the various colonies in a common cause.

Further, the Resolves served as the foundation for military resistance by offering an ultimatum in which militias would be used in a defensive manner to protect the rights and liberties of the colonists against Parliamentary overreach. The Congress' endorsement emboldened Massachusetts in their resistance and laid the foundation for more militant activities. Conservative Americans and loyalists saw the Suffolk Resolves as instigating the violence at Lexington and Concord.[1] As author Todd Andrlik argued, "by sanctioning the Resolves, Congress supported deeds as well as words. It vowed to stand behind a revolution that was in full swing throughout Massachusetts."[2] As T.H. Breen noted, for the colonists "this moment signaled the birth of a united movement to resist oppression," which the North cabinet should ignore at its own peril.[3] While some Americans remained optimistic that the relationship could be repaired, British officials saw the Resolves as a sign of open rebellion and determined that conciliation was no longer possible. This strengthened the resolve of the British cabinet, leading Lord Dartmouth to recognize that retreat was not an option.[4] In British political circles, the lines had been drawn.

In addition, the Suffolk Resolves helped to build the canon of future revolutionary texts through their eloquent and detailed account of respectful disagreement. Other county

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[1] Galloway, *Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 95.

[2] Andrlik, 99.

[3] Breen, 155.

[4] Ibid., 131-132.

conventions drew on the Resolves to formulate their own statement of grievances. Congress' Declaration of Rights and Grievances contains milder, but nonetheless similar, sentiments. Moreover, interesting similarities exist between the Suffolk Resolves and the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration indirectly references previous statements of discontent by acknowledging that the British were made aware of the happiness of the colonists, but chose to continue down the path that would make the King a tyrant in the eyes of his American followers. [5] Many of the general grievances addressed in the Suffolk Resolves are echoed in the Declaration of Independence. The issues of taxation without representation, the establishment of standing armies and due process of law are all examples of shared concerns raised in both documents.[6] The threat to take up arms in defense of colonial rights raised in the Suffolk Resolves comes to fruition in the formal Declaration of Independence and the Revolution that followed.

[5] Scott Douglas Gerber, *The Declaration of Independence: Origins and Impact* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2002), xv-xvii.

[6] Lincoln, ed., *The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts,* 601-605.

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VITA

Duncan McCain Knox was born on February 2, 1993 and grew up in Ozona, Texas. Duncan graduated from Angelo State University in May 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts degree with Highest University Honors in history with a minor in English. He received the 2015 Distinguished Student Award for the College of Arts and Sciences. Duncan served as an active member of the Honors Student Association, Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society, the Student Government Association, Pi Gamma Mu international social sciences honor society, Sigma Tau Delta English honor society, Beta Beta Beta Biological honor society, Alpha Chi, and Phi Kappa Phi. He also worked as the Student Assistant for the University Archives at the West Texas Collection.

Duncan was elected as Vice President of the Honors Student Association as a sophomore and then President for his junior and senior years He served the Honors Program emissary and mentor. Duncan received the Director's Award as the outstanding student in the Honors Program in 2014. He presented multiple paper and panel sessions at the Great Plains Honors Council conference and was the first student from Angelo State University to be elected as the Student Member of the Great Plains Honors Council Executive Board for a one year term. He served as a panelist at two National Collegiate Honors Council conferences. Additionally, he represented the ASU Honors Program as a delegate to both the Naval Academy Foreign Affairs Conference and the Air Force Academy Assembly. In 2013, he received a prestigious US-UK Fulbright Summer Institute Award in Bristol, UK , entitled "Slave Trade and the Atlantic Heritage". He also served as an intern at the United States Supreme Court in the Office of the Curator during the summer of 2014 and as a 2014 Fellow

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He served as a board member on the Friends of Fairmount Cemetary Board, ASU Alumni Association Board, Ft. Concho Museum Board, and Downtown San Angelo, Inc. Board through the Honors Program Community Involvement Initiative. Duncan will attend Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, to pursue a Master of Arts degree in history, supported by the AT&T Chancellor's Fellowship. He was awarded the Marvel Stockwell Scholarship from Pi Gamma Mu international honor society for social sciences and the A.F. Zimmerman Scholarship from Phi Alpha Theta national history honor society. Duncan plans to pursue a career in university teaching and research.

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